

*Letters*

*to*

*David*

*and*

*Jon*

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*and*  
*Jon*

....a collection of letters written  
by Raymond Shaheen while visiting  
in Europe and the Near East, August 1953.

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Dear David and Jon—

Once again I greet you from a trans-Atlantic plane, as I begin another journey to other parts of the world. This time your Dad is with a party setting their faces toward the East, as we want to visit the Holy Land.

En route we will stop briefly at Gander, Newfoundland, and Shannon, Ireland. After London will come Paris, Rome and Cairo, where we will be introduced to the Near East and its seething unrest. All of the journey will be by air, and this trip across the Atlantic is the longest single hop.

We left New York's Idlewild airport promptly at 3:00 p.m. Prior to departure your daddy, as assistant tour leader had his "first problem". It was an unexpected matter and one that comes very rarely. One of the tour group, an unusually large man, had to wait until the last minute to have his passage approved. (I have never seen a man as large as he.) It so happened that one of the passengers failed to show up, so that allowed us an extra seat—thus he was assigned two seats and we were able to take off. Fortunately, the good brother is quite realistic about his physical stature, and he met the situation graciously.

The trip over the Atlantic is well-nigh perfect. In fact we are finding it quite smooth—so calm that good Doc McLane's prescribed dramamine tablets remain untouched in their bottle.

There are six preachers in our group, a woman who is a clerk in the Justice Department and a lawyer. Other members of the Brownell party will join us in London.

Just now we are enjoying the beauty of the western sky. The sun's farewell for the day is quietly shouting in red and gold and this panorama above the clouds is indescribable. Later we are to set our course for 19,000 feet and we'll coast easily above the unseparated layers of clouds which occasionally turn into huge tufts of cotton-like masses or mountain-like drifts of snow.

The trip is so perfect that it seems almost unreal. All this, of course, makes us very happy and we are grateful.

I close for now and will pen some "plane thoughts" as we continue our journey.

Love,

Your Dad

Shannon, Ireland

Dear David and Jon:

The anticipated "plane thoughts" are now being written to you with my feet on good solid ground. We are being delayed here at Shannon for about three hours due to some starter trouble in the number one engine. Already we are about four hours late at London, but the presence of some U. S. Air Force men who have just come into the waiting room gives cause for gratitude that whatever delay we have is due to trouble that is being corrected before we take off. (The U. S. airmen are here as they search the North Atlantic for a plane that has been downed.)

It was delightful to sweep down upon the Emerald Isle. The velvety-like green, as seen from a descending plane, is like a huge welcome mat and even this much of an introduction to old Ireland is enough to give one appreciation for the love that never dies in the Irishman's heart for the home land.

By the way we stopped, some eight hours back, at Gander. It was dark when we landed, so I had no opportunity to "inspect" Bill Reed's work on the airstrip. (He was one of the few men from the Williamsport area sent to Gander some short years ago to lay out this hopping-off spot for Europe.)

Now, as I sit here in the lounge, the parade of names and faces marches before me. Names, in particular of my tour group, who are now being definitely linked with a face and a personality. Less than 12 hours ago "Tour 922" was only an itinerary and a list of names. Already the personalities of each can be felt, and first impressions are making their claims. I am sure that I shall like them all, and I do hope that the experience may prove mutually beneficial.

Much of the good that comes from group travel is not only in the places seen, but in the interplay of the people upon each other. The very poll of names as well as towns from which these travelers come writes a story of its own: Baker from Georgia, Tuttle and Braxton from North Carolina, Myers from Pennsylvania, Crouch from Washington, Hill from Alabama, Warthern from Georgia, Lewis from Arkansas and so on.

I do believe it would be an education in itself just to sit and share the lives of these people, even if we never got to London. But I'd rather move on—and so would they.

Love,

Your Dad

London, England

Dear David and Jon—

Another day in London town! The group, under the charge of Mr. Hill, has gone on the conventional tour of the city and I am taking advantage of the opportunity that I have wanted to walk about on my own and to be free of certain responsibilities for a while.

I've taken a stroll about the city near at hand. Down by Buckingham Gate I paused for a brief period at Westminster Chapel where I went to church six years ago. Then on out to the Palace (Buckingham) where huge crowds were milling around after the changing of the guard.

Then I headed for a few shops on Oxford Street. At more than one silversmith shop I saw replicas of the anointing spoon used by the Archbishop of Canterbury in the coronation service. (Boys, remember how you witnessed it on TV and had Mr. Seitzer waiting at the door at 5:00 a.m.?) Workmen are still engaged in the task of dismantling the huge stands that were erected along the procession route. They tell me that the Abbey is closed to tourists now since it will require many weeks yet to remove all special work prepared for the coronation day.

After lunch (and how improved the meals are! What a difference since 1947 and 1949). I waited in the lobby of the hotel. As I held before me a copy of *Punch*, I feasted my eyes upon and kept my ears open to the festival of activity known only in the lobby of a hotel. Others may have thought I was reading a page from a magazine, but I was really witnessing an exciting drama within the walls so near the hotel's main desk.

Right before me was a man from far away Nigeria. Robed in a long garment of striped material with headgear to match, he was soon joined by at least four others. They have a special delegation attending an important conference. Then, as though it was a change of focus, I saw a cluster of men in another section of the lobby and they are Chinese. And I ask myself the question—do I sound and look as strange to men as they to me? What slaves we can become to the customs and habits of language and nationality in which we imprison ourselves.

Of course there is the usual flow of Americans in and out. They are easily detected. A hundred and one signs give them away—the quality and cut of their clothing, their difficulty in handling foreign currency, their loud talking. Perhaps it is because most Americans travel in groups and they are more prone to be jovial and loud in a company than when traveling separately.

Part of our group returned early, and I had a little while to spend in conversation with them. What I have learned about them surely is interesting. Two of them have distinguished "in-laws." One has a brother-in-law who is U.S. ambassador to India and another has a brother-in-law who is U.S. ambassador to Syria. A third gentleman in the group was

a candidate for governor in Georgia and came in middle man in the race of five candidates. One of the women in the group is an outstanding Southern Baptist and had been active in the mission program of that church.

But, like all other groups, the basic character of each of them will come pretty much to light by the time we bring the tour to an end. What each person genuinely is has a way of making itself felt. That is what makes life so terribly fair, boys. For all life is a pilgrimage and as we continue our journey each of us shows eventually his true self.

Love,

Your Dad

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London, England

Dear David and Jon—

I suppose I should talk about the places I've been visiting—Oxford, Stratford-on-Avon, and a half dozen other English towns, but I'm in no mood to talk about streets, the country-side or the grave of the immortal Shakespeare. Rather, I prefer to echo what I gathered last evening across the table in a famous Hungarian restaurant in Soho.

I had been invited to dinner with a teacher in the London School of Economics. For almost three hours and a half we chatted after we had broken bread together. I am grateful for what I gleaned from their minds, for only as we talk with the people who live in these countries can we catch the grass roots point of view.

Both the teacher and his charming wife are very alert and are keen students of the international scene. I respect their analytical minds. And what have I learned?

First of all, they have given me to understand that the welfare features that were made possible by the previous government and retained by the present Churchill government are here to stay. Only a modification here and there will be the order of things to come, but basically Britain's welfare state is permanent.

Second, and how I hesitate to tell you this David, since you are so fond of President Eisenhower, the English as a rule, according to my informants, have a warm, spot in their hearts for Adlai Stevenson. He is just about to conclude a visit here and the papers have treated him with much kindness and affection.

Third, in some quarters there is a growing dislike for John Foster

Dulles. I feel that this may be due to the very prominent role we are seeking to play in world politics—a role which hitherto had been dominated by the British. I am also told there is a feeling in some quarters that President Eisenhower is strong in his ability to compromise with certain factions with which he must deal, but that this very same faculty could become a handicap if not directed with the utmost caution. (The very same point of view was expressed in one of our American journals as an analysis and evaluation of Eisenhower's first six months.)

In the fourth place, I have learned again that in England even as on the continent, there is a weariness that still persists as the aftermath of the war, or I should say the wars. The Korean affair has added to the agony and even though they know a truce has been arranged, the question that still rises in the shadow of certain scarred buildings is "what has been gained?" There is small comfort in the thought that we are destined to live in a "military state" for the remaining years of our generation.

These are four of the things that we discussed at length, and how good to gather the picture that others have of us, their problems and the problems we must face together. That's why your daddy is so grateful for the opportunity to participate in these tours. No matter how we look at it, ours is one world and there is more to it than all the love and beauty that's nestled in the quiet of the West Branch Valley.

Love,

Your Dad



Paris, France

Dear David and Jon—

Greetings from the "Queen of the Cities"—Paris! They tell me that there is no other city in the world quite like Paris, and I believe it. And now that I am here, what shall I do? Where shall I go?

There is much to do in Paris and one simply follows the bent of his soul. Paris is a city with a body and a city with a soul; it is sod and it is sky; it is clean and it is dirty; it is old and it is new; it is good and it is bad. It is like life and its open door is before me. That's one very real lesson that you boys must learn. All of living is very largely a matter of selection, and life becomes very much a thing of your own choice.

We arrived in Paris this afternoon after a delightful flight across the channel. It took us exactly one hour and fifteen minutes—quite a con-

trast to the eight-hour crossing we made in 1949 by ferry from Harwick to Hook von Holland. I'm beginning to understand why folks who travel by air are so enthusiastic about it. It surely is a wonderful way to get somewhere in a shorter period of time.

When we landed at the Paris airport, we surely were convinced that we were in Europe. The foreign tongues heard in so many strange languages gives the whole airport a truly inter-world feeling. We saw again Nigerians, some French workmen being returned from a provincial project, a group of veiled Moslem women and an endless number of English, American and French.

They took us through customs without opening a bag—typical of the treatment we will be receiving in many places, although I'm not so sure it will be simple in the Near East.

When I got to our hotel on the Left Bank I was pleased to discover that Charles Jones had made a special trip into the great city to see me. He is a lad I confirmed in Messiah's Church, now a GI stationed not too far from Paris, about seventy miles. He's a fine chap and we'll be going to church—the American Cathedral on Avenue King George V—tomorrow morning.

Everywhere I've gone today I've found some evidence of the crippling strike that existed so very recently. Part of its grip was released this morning—the trains and buses now operate and there is the restoration of utilities. But what a blow it must have struck. The Paris edition of the New York Herald Tribune referred to it as France's "most widespread strike movement in seventeen years". Several million federal and municipal workers were involved and they tied up the government offices, the country's railroads and the Paris transportation network. All this at the height of the tourist season.

The postal employes are still on strike and there is no movement of the mails whatsoever. There's a question in my mind whether I should post this letter in Paris or wait until after I've flown to Rome.

The only 'good' thing about the strike, I'm told, is that it wasn't Communist inspired. It was more the work of the non-Communist federations who were vigorously protesting against some anticipated economy measures which have been proposed by the government of Premier Joseph Laniel. But a strike is a strike, and the stench of uncollected garbage in the street outside my window reminds me how effective a weapon it can be.

Tonight I plan to have dinner with the very capable lady who arranged for my group back in 1949. It will be good to see her again. She is a very strong character and it is worth the trip here to talk with her and to put my finger on the pulse beat of the current French reaction to things national and international.



Hope you boys are well and that you're not getting in the way of the workmen who are pouring the walls for our new Christian education building.

Love,

"An American in Paris",

Your Dad

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Paris, France

Dear David and Jon—

What a profitable evening I had last night. Once more I had the good pleasure of talking with a native in the country we visit and have been able to catch some glimpses that others have of us and of themselves.

But first of all I must tell you something of my friend. After all we are poor travelers indeed if all we know of a city in a strange land has to do with the food we eat, the shops we visit or the historical points of interest that are so casually seen. It's a poor tourist whose only memory of France is a glance at the Eiffel Tower, a sip of wine or an evening at the Folles Bergere. A country is never really seen until you see it through the eyes of the people who live in it. Since I cannot stay for a month, I will do my best to gain what I can from my friend for whom France is so beloved—her very own.

Ah, yes, I was going to tell you something of her. She is exceptionally well read and is a keen student of national and international affairs. She has been giving her life to developing a better understanding between peoples of other countries.

When folks come to France she will see that they early learn to understand her country through the eyes of her people. Last week she took a group into the French countryside to visit a small French town that had suffered damage at the hands of American bombers.

There the American group talked with the mayor of the town—he described what life was like in his village before the American bombs fell, what it was like during the bombing and after. According to my friend the Communists have made a point of these American bombings and have used them to discredit U.S.A. in every way possible.

What an impact, mutually helpful, came from such a meeting. No wonder my friend is greatly disturbed by the countless number of Americans who see little more of France than the Champs Elysees.

My friend was imprisoned during the Nazi occupation. Her kind, motivated by high and noble ideals, are bound to get in trouble when freedom is threatened. In her zeal to serve her country, she sought to cross the border taking with her forty-five letters to post in the neutral land. In her attempt to cross she was caught by the Nazis. From the time they first caught her until they arrived at the tribunal to arraign her, she had gotten rid of all the letters. Some she tore up into shreds and tossed into a sewer, others she cleverly handed to a young girl who secreted them away. The last letter she chewed into bits and swallowed.

Her days in prison have mellowed her and given her a great understanding of human nature and the terrible inhumanity of war.

She is a truly unusual woman, one who demands respect and honor. It is a thrilling thing to meet a giant of character like her.

We talked of many things and again I learned that France, like so many of these European countries, is so weary of war's terrible toll and consequently faces the future with fear and trembling lest some spark of international misunderstanding be fanned by the Soviets and the Americans into a conflagration of world war. They seem to feel that they have no decision to make, save to side with us if a terrible thing should happen. In the meantime they fervently hope that both of the world's great powers focus their eyes more on humanity than on each other alone.

It's pretty much, boys, like a strange situation that we might picture as existing between Harold Shafer and your daddy with Uncle Karl in the middle—between the two of us. And some time, in the face of a misunderstanding, Harold and I felt we had to fight it out to settle our difference.

Before we could get to each other's land, we'd meet at Uncle Karl's and do our scrapping in his front yard and create much damage. Poor Uncle Karl would have little to say about it and of necessity might even have to get into the struggle to help your dad, and thus be involved in a fight which he didn't start but had to help finish because he's your uncle. That's somewhat of the position in which France thinks of herself.

God bless you, boys, and may you soon pass on to your children a world freer from the threat of war than we've given you.

Love,

Your Dad

Dear David and Jon—

Rome—called by many the “Eternal City”—and whose heart does not leap up at the thought of it! He who comes here can almost feel the mighty tide of endless history forging its way through his mind.

Rome! Here went great contributions into every conceivable field—art, religion, law—until the highest in culture was attained.

We descended upon the city as we came in by plane from Paris, and what a spectacle to behold. First building of any size to claim my eye was the majestic dome of Saint Peter's, then the Colosseum, and as we neared the airport we caught glimpses of the 2,000 year-old city wall and the equally ancient aqueduct.

Did I ever tell you boys the story of Rome's beginning? It is quite old. Now you think the old Blooming Grove church area is old since you remember your mother reading about old Dr. Adam and Grandpa and Grandma Helm's relatives who settled there in the early part of the nineteenth century. Well this city of Rome has its beginnings forty times older than Blooming Grove. It is possible, they tell me, to date the beginning of Rome back to 2,000 years before Christ when the Alban hills were volcanic and rained their ashes upon some of the first folk who lived here. Eight hundred years before Jesus was born there were shepherds on these hills.

Now when you boys study ancient history you will be told the legend of Romulus and Remus. It is said that these two brothers were put in a basket and placed in the Tiber River by their grand uncle. This was done to save them from their brother's intense anger. The basket, so the story goes, was caught in the marshes where afterward the city of Rome was built. According to the storied tale, these two, Romulus and Remus, were nursed by a she-wolf and fed by a woodpecker. So they were kept alive until a shepherd found them.

Being active and energetic leaders, as they became older, they gathered together war-like shepherds and established a city where they had been found.

The years that followed saw Rome develop into the greatest power in the world. In AD 27 Rome became an empire. Nero is probably the best known of these emperors. You will probably remember something of him from the motion picture, *Quo Vadis*, that we saw.

It was during Nero's reign that Paul fulfilled his life-time ambitions to visit Rome and here it is said that he was beheaded after having been imprisoned in the year 66. You ask your mother to show you in the Bible the letters that Paul wrote from Rome—Philemon, Colossians, Philippians and Ephesians.

Your Dad must almost pinch himself to make himself believe that it is he who is actually here in Rome. It is a wonderful dream come true again.

Tomorrow I shall eagerly visit some of Rome's places of true historical significance. As I do so, I shall want to remember the debt we owe to those who have gone before us. Especially shall I be grateful for the fact that Christianity came to this place. When I visit the catacombs I shall again think of the price they paid to be worthy of the name of Jesus Christ!

God bless you boys!

Love,

Your Dad



Rome, Italy

Dear David and Jon—

It's great once more to get the dust of Rome on your shoes. We've been doing our share of sightseeing and believe you me it's mighty good to return to this city whose gloried past is cast upon her from every side.

We started off quite early and visited the Pantheon, said to be the most perfect among all classical buildings in Rome. It gives an excellent idea of Roman architectural genius. Built in 27 BC, it was a pagan temple until the year 392 AD. Some 200 years later the pagan temple was converted into a Christian church. In it have been buried the kings of Italy since 1870.

The second church we visited is perhaps the most famous in the world and I want to spend the rest of the time in this letter to tell you about it.

It is Saint Peter's church, of which a poet once said:

"But thou, of temples old or altars new,  
Standest alone—with nothing like thee,  
What could be  
Of earthly structure in His honor piled  
Of sublimest aspect? Majesty,  
Power, glory, strength and beauty, all are aisled  
In this eternal ark of worship."

The first church of Saint Peter was built in 324 AD when the Emperor Constantine decided to erect such a building near the spot, according

to tradition, where Saint Peter was buried. This location was the Circus of Nero, where many early Christians perished. Do you remember when daddy told in one of his sermons how the cruel and pagan emperor ordered the Christian on occasion to be dipped in oil so that they would serve as torches to illuminate the gardens at night, once their bodies had been ignited?

It took 25 years to finish the first church and in it were crowned kings and emperors. The last emperor to be crowned in the first church was Nicholas V in 1452, 40 years before Columbus came to America.

One thousand years after Saint Peter's church was first built, it was declared unsafe and the Pope ordered it demolished and a new church built.

It was in 1506 that the cornerstone was laid and 176 years after the date of its foundation, Saint Peter's was completed. Think of it! The cost of the building at that time was about \$60 million, but I doubt if any one has any idea of how much it would cost to reproduce it today.

You boys ask Mr. Ellmaker some time to tell you how big our Christian Education Building is going to be. I think he will tell you that it's about 48 feet wide and 106 feet long. To give you an idea of how long big Saint Peter's is—well, it is actually 447 feet wide and 613 feet long. Now go 10 times the width of our building and six times the length and see where you would be. It probably would take you way beyond Jim Poole's gas station and south almost to Lucius Heller's back door. Now how high is it from the pavement (that's what they call the inside floor of these great churches) to the dome? The distance is 448 feet. Do you remember when you were in Messiah's bell tower when the man was working on it this Summer? Remember how high you were? Well, this is so high that you could put about six more towers on top of ours in order to be as high as the top of this world famous Saint Peter's.

I've said nothing about the beauty of Saint Peter's. It is absolutely magnificent. The arches, the altars, the columns, the railings, the walls—they all glitter with gold. The floors are inlaid with rare marble.

It was so good to visit here, but your dad was quite disturbed. He found little of the spirit of prayer on the part of the throngs who came. And it seemed that many, many were there to be impressed by the majesty of a building and few left whispering the name of God. And while our Blessed Lord should have the best of our hands as His temple, we must never forget that the finest gold is as nothing if He is not enshrined in the heart.

Love,

Your Dad



Rome, Italy

Dear David and Jon—

Another day in Rome! Where shall I begin in this letter? Shall I tell you of our visits to the Caracalla Baths where we heard Tosca? Shall I write of our visit to the Methodist and Lutheran churches in this great city? Would you like to hear about the legend associated with the building of the ancient church of Saint Mary Maggione? Shall I tell you of the Mamertine prison where, according to holy tradition, the two apostles, Peter and Paul, were confined until they suffered martyrdom under Nero? Would you like to hear about the church on the Appian Way? Maybe you would like me to tell you something of the temples and the forum in ancient Rome, years before the birth of our Blessed Lord.

There are so many things of which I could write, but I shall pass them by for the time being to speak of something else that you ought to know.

It has to do with something I learned from a reliable person who lives here in Rome. She is a professor and your mommie and I met her four years ago.

As we were sitting in a street-side cafe near the American legation, she gave several of us a clear picture of the way the Communist Party begins to work.

She has heard that in a certain neighborhood near her home the Communists were eager to form a cell. A cell is a small group of people who become a chapter or unit in the whole party.

She went to the appointed place and this was her experience. In a small underground room she found about twenty people present, seated in rows quite like the fashion in a small rural church. In fact the whole place had something of a religious atmosphere. The significant thing was that the whole meeting soon took on a religious feeling. As it was time for the meeting to begin, the leader, in preacher-like manner, entered the room and went to the central place at the front of the people. He stood beside a table upon which was a photo covered by a flag. From this focal point the man began to speak. Frequently he would use large words and become quite involved in his speech, all of which seemed to impress the people rather than confuse them. He spoke of the need to have certain economic rights guaranteed the poor working class and harangued the wealthy people.

At the close of the meeting, getting the little group emotionally stirred, he suggested that the cell be named for an Italian boy in the neighborhood who had died during the war. When the meeting was over some of the people were seen kneeling at the little rostrum and making the sign of the cross as they left the room. All this, you see,

was a part of the scheme to clothe communism in the garb of religion. It is a terrible thing and only the very alert people take guard against it.

We have been told that Communism is still and will continue to be a mighty force with which to reckon in these days. Fortunately there is in some quarters a reservoir of good will for the so-called free world, but this is the day when the peasants, of necessity, prefer bread to anything else. Aside from all the beneficent features of the Marshall plan, I still think it the greatest single stroke ever struck against the Soviet scheme.

Be good boys. And God bless you David as you've entered another year. Did Jon pull your ears?

Love,

Your Dad

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Rome, Italy

Dear David and Jon—

A few more hours in Italy and then we board the plane for Cairo, Egypt. It will please Jim Fennell, TWA Manager at Williamsport, to know that we will be on one of his company's planes for this hop. Remember how weeks ago we talked with Mr. Fennell about this journey and how we went to the map at the airport and studied this whole trip?

To date we have been on Pan American planes and one of the Italian air lines. Before we get finished we will be on at least six different air lines. It surely is a wonderful way to travel when you want to make time.

Now Dad has a little time before we leave for the airport. Would you like to hear a little about our tour members?

There are ten of us, including Mr. Hill, and I will tell you about him first. He is a fine young man who has been associated with the Brownell Company for several years. During the war he was a pilot on a huge bomber and later served as an instructor. When the war was over he was undecided as to what he should do with his life. After a year in law school, he decided on the Gospel ministry: I have every reason to believe that he is able and sincerely consecrated.

By far the most colorful figure in our party is a young lawyer from Athens, Georgia. He is the largest man with whom I have ever been acquainted. There are certain times when his weight causes us great concern. He is jovial and quite witty. Adding to this distinction is the fact that he is quite interested in Georgia politics and was a candidate for governor of the state in the latest election.

There are three women in the party. One of them is a one hundred per cent Texan. (As though one could ever find a Texan who is less than one hundred per cent) She has been a resident of Washington, D.C. for the past fourteen years, where she works regularly in the Department of Justice. I laughed to myself when I observed the address she put after her name when she signed the guest book at Shakespeare's birthplace back in Stratford-on-Avon. Although living in Washington for more than a dozen years, she put her address as Dallas, Texas. That's surely being true to one's home town. She is interested in everything and is proving a real traveler.

The second woman in our party is from Georgia. She is a great worker in the Southern Baptist church and is vitally interested in their women's and foreign mission work. She knows her Bible and is a ready conversationalist.

Our third lady is from Chicago and she just joined our group yesterday.

The remaining members of our group are all clergymen—two Lutherans and three Methodists. We are most congenial and are learning much from each other. Your dad seems like the baby in the bunch, as Professor Myers was his teacher at Gettysburg, and the other four preachers have spent from two to three times longer in the ministry than your father. But it makes for a grand trip and much of the virtue lies in what we learn from each other. Sometimes in our conversations I am amazed to learn what little we really know about each other. That's why group travel can be so beneficial. When we are thrown with each other there are times when all we have to do is to talk.

For most people the most important things in their lives is their own little world and themselves. As we give each other a chance to talk it is surprising what we can learn about each other without having to ask questions. All their fears, hopes, loves, works become quite apparent in the short course of time.

It is time now that I should bring this letter to a close. Soon I will be getting so very near the land of the pyramids and the ancient pharaohs. For many of us the trip will be just beginning when we land at Cairo, since it is there in the Near East that most of our interest lies,

Keep your eyes on the maps, boys. Give my love to your cousins, Richard, Barbara and Karl. So glad that you were able to win first prize with your chickens. Just like a preacher's son to get an A-1 hen. You'll be real farmers after all.

Love,

Your Dad





Dear David and Jon—

The trouble with taking a trip like this one very often lies in the fact that you run out of superlatives. By that your dad means that the traveler finds each spot visited a place of unique charm and unusual history. All that he probably feels about the new country is equally true about all others visited and yet somehow he feels the latest city is different.

When good "Doc" Hall was with our group in 1949 he solved the problem quite simply by calling each new place and each new experience the "highlight" and we who were with him knew exactly what he meant.

Well now your dad can honestly say that today just hasn't any other day like it in his life. It seems that a whole life-time has been condensed into a single span of less than 24 hours.

Let me give you an idea of what I mean. Last night we landed at Athens, Greece. It was our first introduction to this particular storied part of the world. What a peculiar feeling I got. It seemed like every single page of the ancient history texts that I once studied came flipping past me.

Less than three hours after that our Constellation landed at Cairo. It was like the picture of the magic carpet and the story was ours. Here in this city we have already relived at least ten thousand years of history. That was so vivid for me when I walked in the Cairo museum today and saw the surprisingly well-preserved objects so typical of life so many thousands of years ago.

Your dad better go back now and tell you how we came into Cairo. Our plane was quite late, so it was about 3:00 o'clock this morning that we finally came to our hotel—the Mena House— on the outskirts of Cairo.

It was so fascinating to drive through the streets in the early hours of the morning and to actually see for the very first time in your life the pages of the storied East come into a living scene. There were the Arabic inscriptions of the shops and street signs; the uniformed police wearing their oriental headdress, the fez; the crouched figures of shopkeepers trying to sleep by their wares; the donkey carts laden with produce; the camel train approaching from the desert; the odd smell that is distinctive to the Nile; the deep dark eyes of the Arabs who greet you at the taxi stand and assist you to your hotel room.

So you come to Egypt by night. But it was not until morning came (we got only three hours of sleep since the full program had to be kept despite the late plane arrival) when I looked from my hotel win-

dow and saw, of all things, the largest of the pyramids standing outside before me. I'll never be able to describe that sensation. I am so glad that no one had told me that this sight would meet my eyes. To come upon it unexpected-like became a thrill that cannot be put into words.

Only my notes, which I want now to record in my diary, can hint in a small way at what I shall declare as one of the truly very great days in my life. Of one thing I am certain—there has never been a day just like this one and somehow I feel an inch taller tonight because of the reflected light from the ancient East that shines over my shoulder.

Love,

Your Dad



Beirut, Lebanon

Dear David and Jon—

With only a scrap of paper in my hand, a paper you will remember that Grandpa Shaheen gave me a number of weeks ago, your Dad found his way this afternoon to the very spot where your great grandpa lived in this very old land.

The paper had strange writing on it. I think you said it looked like "scribbling", since Arabic is a series of curved lines and has no formed letters as we think of writing. But those funny curves were my guide today. They took me to a store house, on the side of a hill banked by trees and overlooking the very beautiful harbor of the city of Beirut.

What a ride it was, as picturesque as anything I will probably know in this old country! We went by a private car and climbed and climbed. The hills were fairly green with vegetation (a marked contrast from the desert we had known for several days in Egypt) and the trees were most fragrant.

The air! What word can I use to describe it? As long as I can remember, Grandpa Shaheen has always talked about the air here, and now I readily understand what he means.

As we journeyed some six miles beyond this beautiful city of Beirut, we saw shepherds with their sheep and olive tree after olive tree—a scene which must have been familiar to all men who have dwelt under the Syrian sky for thousands upon thousands of years.

Our driver had to inquire at several places until we came to the store house on the hill with its red-tiled roof. When he made inquiry

of the head of the house, using the piece of paper with his name in Arabic—the piece of paper Grandpa Shaheen had given me—you should have seen his face light up. Never anywhere at any time have I seen anything that could match it. Suddenly, despite my inability to speak Arabic, there was the flash of identity. And, I knew that I was in my father's house.

Immediately, the hospitality of the East was expressed. There was the question of the health of my parents, their children and all that is related to their welfare. Then we were swamped on every side by the family circle which seemed to come from everywhere and we were taken inside the house where we were given something to eat and drink. Question upon question followed and thanks to the younger son in the family who teaches English in one of the schools, we were able to carry on a mutually satisfactory conversation.

What lights these people had in their eyes and how warm their souls! Professor Myers (Gettysburg Seminary Old Testament teacher) who accompanied me said the whole experience for him was like reading a page of domestic life in the Bible!

It was from this very home, boys, that your grandpa left for the New World when he was eighteen years of age. Now that I have been here I can easily understand why the farewell greeting of his mother left an unforgettable touch upon him. Remember how he told us how she waved a cedar branch dipped in oil as a torch against the sky when his steamer sailed from the harbor?

Tonight I shall walk under the Syrian sky and I shall look from the sea to the hills and as I do so I shall see a torch waving back and forth! Its light—symbol of love and devotion—will be for me also a guide and a lamp on whatever journey I shall take.

Love from the land of your fathers,

Dad



Sidon, Lebanon

Dear David and Jon—

It's one thing to read in a text book or a newspaper about Rome, Paris or London, and then to be able to visit there. It's quite another thing, however, to read about a place in the Bible, and then have the privilege to visit in the neighborhood of some place that you know nothing about except from the Bible. I suppose that's why I have been so deeply moved today.

You see, we are at Sidon and Tyre. The Good Book says that our Blessed Lord came near to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and at once this heart of mine leaps up at so great a thought.

Our hotel is by the very side of the Mediterranean, and tonight its lapping waves will be as a lullaby. I have just been sitting on the balcony by our room and the half moon is above me just as I am sure it must above you. (Remember how we used to look at the stars when we slept out?)

This afternoon we drove to the city of Tyre. It is the site of the ancient Phoenician seaport. As we got there we recalled the prophecy spoken against the city in Ezekiel.

We gathered by the side of the road and and we asked Professor Myers to read the prophecy for us. He read certain passages from Ezekiel, Chapters 26-28. I suggest that you take your own Bible, David, and read some of the verses to Jon. Your mother will help you with the hard words.

It seemed just like a little prayer meeting by the sea as we stood in a little cluster there and realized how the prophecy had come true. God said the city would be dipped into the sea, and that's exactly what happened. For years, the enemies of the Phoenicians sought to conquer her, but her sea-going strength and capacities were always an escape for her. Eventually she was sacked, and the forces of Nebuchadnezzar were successful.

The Good Book also says that "it shall be a place for spreading of nets in the midst of the sea." Today I snapped a picture of fishermen mending their nets, getting ready for their catch tonight. Even so the prophetic record has been fulfilled for thousands of years.

I must also tell you of another page of the Bible that came to life this afternoon. As we were driving, we came to a potter's house. We stopped, of course, and the potter, who was doing his work much in the same fashion as the fathers before him in ages without number, obliged us graciously.

Even though he was finished for the day, he went back to his shack and picked up a large handful of clay. This he threw upon a board in front of him which was in the shape of a round disk. The disk revolved according to the pedaling of a larger disk to which it was fastened.

The latter he kept turning by the movement of his feet. As the disk went around, he dipped his fingers in water and molded the shapeless clay to his liking.

In less than ten minutes he had perfectly formed for us a pot, a pitcher and a vase. These were then taken to an oven in which the objects were stacked and baked. The fuel for the oven was chaff. I saw

a boy who sat for six hours and did nothing but grab one handful after another of the chaff which kept the fire burning at a steady temperature.

Now when your Sunday School teacher tells you about Jeremiah and the "potter passage" in the Bible, you ought to have a good idea of what she is talking about.

That, boys, is the main reason why your Daddy has come on this trip. He wants to know something of the land and the people which serves as the background for what appears in the Bible. Many of the customs and practices of the people are largely what they were like in the times of the prophets and the kings and in the days of Jesus, Paul, and Peter.

Good night boys. May God bless you and keep you.

Love,

Dad



Cairo, Egypt

Dear David and Jon—

How would you boys like to touch something that is almost 4,500 years old? That's exactly what your dad has done a little while ago when he stood half-way atop the largest of the pyramids and snapped a photo of the setting sun.

What a day this has been! There was the visit to the museum, the drive through the "old city" of Cairo, the visit to the aged church of St. Sargius built over the spot where the Holy Family is supposed to have stayed on their flight into Egypt, and then the ride by camel to the Gizeh pyramids.

I'll admit we made quite a picture as we got on our camels. A little jerking here and a quick lunge forward and before you know it you are in the air atop this ancient beast. Even though you are on a camel you look anything but wise. (That you'll find out for yourselves when you see the picture of the group that I've planned to bring you.)

Part of the experience of a camel ride lies in your dealing with the camel driver who accompanies you. For thousands of years they have "bargained" and harangued the tourists. They are most clever. They know enough English to get across to you that you are their chief concern—they will watch out for you and protect you.

After they have succeeded in telling you of their desire to please you,

they turn to their own needs as they walk by your side as you jog along. They have bronzed faces, pearly teeth and almost pitch black eyes.

They will tell you that they are poor and miserable creatures, not well, have a large family and if you will please give them a generous portion of "baksheesh" they will remember you all their lives. I have come to think that there's a wide chance that nothing will ever harm me—for about 80 per cent of all these folks with which I have had to deal have promised to bless me, to pray for me at least five times a day and that they wish for me long, long life and much happiness.

Fortunately, I have benefited from two things on this tour. In the first place I was conditioned to this begging business by Dr. Dunkelberger at Susquehanna. He told me many of his experiences when he was here a number of years ago. Then too, we have a most efficient Arab guide who "protects" us from them since governmental decree now curbs this sort of thing. But I do not believe that the "upturned palm" will fade out of the picture overnight.

But back now to the pyramids. I must tell you something about them.

The pyramids to which I have gone and slept in their shadows were built as burial places for the rulers. In reality they were mortuary temples. The word for them is colossal. They remind me of the experience of the Pennsylvania German who saw an ostrich for the first time and exclaimed in amazement: "Gosh, such a thing just 'aint'".

The largest of these pyramids is Cheops and it stands on a plateau 1,600 feet from east to west and 1,300 feet from north to south. The length of each side of the pyramids is now 746 feet, but originally it was 756 feet. Its perpendicular height is now 450 feet, but was originally 484 feet.

The material out of which it was built is yellow limestone. The area covers more than 12 acres of land and contains more than 3,057,000 cubic yards of masonry. When Napoleon Bonaparte was here one of his lieutenants estimated that there were enough stones in it to build a might substantial wall all around the borders of France.

What I have told you in this letter is but a minute out of a day and I shall look forward to the time when I can sit quietly with you and tell you again and again of all these things.

Love,

Your Dad



Dear David and Jon—

We left our hotel at Sidon, on the very edge of the Mediterranean, quite early this morning and we have leisurely traveled to Baalbek. What have we seen on the way?

The first thing that impressed us was the winding strips of macadam by which we zig-zagged our way up and down the continuous chains of hills. The roads have been built and maintained, I am told, for the most part by the government for military purposes and also by the oil companies in this area. We have seen huge tanks—like those at Sylvan Dell—at many points. This morning we saw a tanker being loaded off-shore with this precious liquid.

How rock-covered are these hills! And just as determined are the natives, for they have terraced every available inch of ground and are doing their utmost to grow crops.

There is an old legend about rocks that has many interpretations. This is the way I tell it:

When God made the earth He had all the rocks for the world put into two bags and when the angel was flying over this part of the world, one of the bags ripped open.

One has only to be here a little while until he can readily understand how a story like this would start.

Occasionally, we found a herder with his goats, and once we stopped to take a photograph. The poor animals—they go anywhere and seem to grab at almost anything that seems to have the slightest form of vegetation. You ought to see them descend a steep hill in search of water.

As we journeyed along our way we came to the site of an ancient castle. Only the ruins remain, but enough to indicate how in the time of the Crusaders these brave folks defended themselves. The fortress was ideally located at a tremendous height. From it one could see for miles and miles in every direction. As I stood at one place, I could see two women in the distance with a flask-packed donkey, who were drawing water at an old well.

The most majestic of all sights, however, came when we beheld snow-covered Mt. Hermon. Now there's a thrill for you no matter how you look at it. Physically speaking, it's a refreshing thing to look at the crevices filled with snow while you swelter in the sun miles away. Spiritually speaking, it's a tonic to the soul to view for the first time the same mountain that was so great an inspiration to the Psalmists.

We are in the land of the Bible and despite macadam roads, electricity, the famous "jeep", the Coco-Cola and the Pepsi-Cola stands (how

odd to see the Arabic for cola!), and the oil tank trucks, the land and the people remain much the same as they were thousands of years ago. The shepherd's flute sounds the same and the peasant with his oxen-trod wheat is still to be seen.

Tonight we have come to Baalbek. In all of this country one can find no more impressive ruins of the Graeco-Roman period than we find here in the court and the magnificent temples. As pagans they built temples of worship to their gods. Here were erected shrines to Jupiter, Bacchus, and Venus.

Three steps cut out of one solid piece of rock formed the entrance to the great court of the altar. The magnificence of the temple can be pictured only as we remember that there were 84 columns, each 25 feet high, three and a half feet in diameter, and weighing 50 tons! The Building Committee from Messiah's Lutheran Church sure would have a field day if they could come here now.

Good night, with a weariness that is only released by the sacred thoughts of Bible days and the memory of folks you love—

Your Dad

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Damascus, Syria

Dear David and Jon—

This letter, boys, carries the postmark of the oldest living city in the world. We have just come to Damascus and our entrance into the city, after a ride through mountains that are ribbed with rocks, was a most welcome experience.

For almost a week now I have had my first taste of the ancient East. Already I must admit that the man who comes here without certain sustaining interests will surely be in for a disappointing time. If he is interested in the Bible and the land of the Book, he will find much to keep him contented.

If he is interested in antiquities, the earmarks of civilizations thousands of years ago, he will be delighted in this section of the world as he cannot in any other. But if he should come as a traveler from the West simply on a tour, he will be of men the most miserable creature. The East is not the the West. And, no matter what it may adopt of the western world, definite signs and conditions of the past are practically everywhere present.

The food is different. Americans in particular who are accustomed to steak well done, mashed potatoes and gravy will find it a task to get



used to oriental dishes, which they may not like. The dress of the people is different. Most women, despite the great heat, wear nothing but black—and dresses that go to the ankles. Many of them are veiled and seldom do you see them walking “empty-handed”. Usually there is a basket or bundle atop their heads or some tiny tot riding astride the shoulders. The men wear long flowing garments and the fez. The red cylinder-like hat is very common.

The people are different in their manners. While there is no place in all the world like the East for hospitality, the camel driver and the merchants have a pattern all their own. The driver is insistent in his desire to get an extra coin. He will cajole, he will flatter, he will scold, he will do almost anything under the sun to gain some token more than his original fee or bargain. The merchant, too, loves to bargain. He sets his price high, and there it remains unless the would-be-purchaser is about to be lost or a counter price is offered. Having been warned in advance about such practice, I have yet “to be taken”—at least as I see things now.

But all this hasn't disappointed me a bit. I came to the East because I knew it was different. And I have come to love the whole experience of looking into the faces of these people and watching them react in a 100 different ways.

They are deep-thinkers. It may be so because they have much time to spend in meditation. There seem to be few night meetings and I would surmise a marked scarcity of committees and organizations to which to belong. Of course this generalization is based upon my observation of what we might refer to as the peasant class. The people are very religious. So far we have met mostly Moslems and Christians. Even the taxicabs in which I have ridden have had above the driver's seat some religious memento.

Well, our trip is about half completed. I am delighted that I should be able to visit the land of my father and now I eagerly await going to Jerusalem. In three days we shall be there. Words fail me when I think of the privilege of being able to walk where He walked.

But one must always remember that the Christ cannot be imprisoned on any Judean hill or in any Galilean village. He is everywhere present and as close to your bended knees in South Williamsport as He can be to me when I walk in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Love,

Your Dad



Dear David and Jon—

A little while ago your dad walked on about 400 perfectly beautiful oriental rugs—each one spread out on the floor along side each other so as to form one of the grandest coverings I have ever seen.

Above me was one of the most elaborate and highly decorated ceilings in the old world. Pieces of glass and precious stones were fitted together to form what is called a mosaic.

The ceilings of this building were part of a great dome and each wall seemed to have its own minaret. Your dad was in a mosque. Now a mosque is in reality a Mohammedan church, but one does not see any chairs or seats. The people either stand, sit or kneel.

The most famous of the mosques in Syria is the one here in Damascus, known as the Mosque of Omayyid. In this one, there is a tomb in the center which is said to contain the head of John the Baptist. This is one of the three places said to contain the skull of the forerunner of our Blessed Lord. The other two places, I am told, are the church of Saint James in Jerusalem and the hill of Samaria. Therefore one is very much at liberty to take his choice. We have good reason to believe, however, that he was beheaded at the Summer palace of Herod on the east side of the Dead Sea, located at the hot springs of Machaeris.

This is a profitable experience for us to be in Damascus at this particular time, since it is a holiday season for the Moslem world.

Throngs upon throngs of people are here and we learn something of the ways and character of folks who are not Christian. Incidentally, there are many, many more people in this part of the world who are non-Christian than those who embrace the Christian faith. In this old city of Damascus there are three Mohammedans for each Christian. At least that is what I was told today. There are at least 300 mosques here.

As you boys become older you ought to read and study what you can about other religions of the world. When you live so peacefully in a quiet community like the Williamsport area you get the feeling that practically everyone is a Christian with a small group of folks who belong to the Jewish community.

Here in this part of the world practically all are either Moslem or Jewish with a smaller number belonging to the Christian church. Strangely enough, you can't tell very well who is Christian or Moslem here in Damascus unless you ask. We had two guides the other day and each one of them I surmised was a Christian. Only when I asked did I learn that they were followers of the prophet Mohammed.

Going to and from the mosques today we passed through the well known bazaars of the city. A bazaar, as you should know, is the shopping

area. What a sight and what a smell. We found brass shops galore, silversmith and goldsmith shops, pastry, candy, leather, shoes, pocket-books, in fact every conceivable trinket under the sun. Meat hangs uncovered. (What a field day dear "Doc" Colvin could have here).

At one place we found a man chipping the stones that will be placed in the fine mosaic boxes, trays and stands. By his bare foot he held the stone against a slab of marble while he cut it out to the desired size. In another stall we saw a small band saw being operated and there the man was cutting the walnut wood that will be used in the boxes that tourists will buy. They are lovely inlaid things and I had the task of my life saying "no" to an insistent merchant.

Damascus, old Damascus. What lessons I have already been taught in this city. Time does not allow me to write them, but I am certain they shall remain in the fabric of my soul.

Love,

Dad

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Damascus, Syria

Dear David and Jon—

In a very short while we will be leaving this old, old city. Our plans call for us to go to Beirut and from there we will fly to Jerusalem.

Yesterday was such a grand day for us. I've just finished making certain entries in my diary and I'll take a few minutes to share some of them with you right now.

We visited the street called Straight—it's another of the places that you can read about in the Bible. In fact, if you turn now to the Book of Acts and read the ninth chapter you will have a good idea of where your dad has been. It was on this street called Straight that Ananias came to Paul after his conversion on the way to Damascus. What a strange feeling, a very deep feeling, comes to one when he knows in his heart especially the significance of certain places that have known a definite impact of the ages and on which the very finger of God has been stamped.

Likewise, we visited the chapel of Saint Ananias, built presumably upon the site of the house where Ananias received his vision when the Lord commanded him to go to Paul. It's a quaint underground sanctuary and there our hearts were strangely stilled when my good comrade and my former Gettysburg Seminary teacher, Professor Myers, read for the group the experiences of Paul in and near Damascus.

More than one prayer was made in that holy spot and I'm reasonably certain that the burden of each must have been—"Spirit of God, descend upon my heart." That, too, you must remember boys. God has a way of coming to each of us. We must be willing to be used of and by Him.

In the course of the afternoon we came to the wall where tradition says the great apostle was let down in a basket. A church now stands on the site inside the wall and once more some of us heard the still small voice within.

However, the impression of the wall and the memory of an event long ago was suddenly disturbed by the immediate sight that confronts one by the side of the road—a settlement of the refugees who live in tents made of rags, straw or canvas. They are but part of the 800,000 Arabs who were forced to leave their homes when the free state of Israel was established.

I shall not speak of the matter at this time, except to mention the agonizing cry for "baksheesh" that came to me from a boy about eight years of age. The youngster was blind and the pathetic look on his face has left a marked impression upon me.

I've shaken off many of the cries for "baksheesh" without any qualm of conscience, but this one was different. How deeply satisfied I was to know that just around the corner I had seen a sign that read "Lutheran World Federation Clinic and Service to Refugees."

If I was ever happy that I had asked people of my parish to give liberally to Lutheran World Action (the overseas relief arm of our church) I was never more happy than at that precise moment. It allayed to some small degree the anguish when I discovered that my compassion and that of millions of others was already at work.

But that's the way life is, boys. You can't stand still and look at something that happened a long time ago. God does not allow us to be idly tied to some past event, no matter how great. There is always the present hour with its crying need and on it we must focus our eyes.

Love,

Dad



Jerusalem, Jordan

Dear David and Jon—

This you may call an "extra" letter, I guess. I've already written you one today, but this one must come to you also. We had a delightful

surprise after supper the first evening we were in Jerusalem and I am using this letter to tell you about it.

Mr. Fuad Saadeh, our agent here in the Middle East, is giving us his personal attention. He is a deeply spiritual man and we are grateful for all that it means. Because of his warm soul, he is trying to make the most of our visit for us. This desire on his part prompted him to take our group to the Shepherd's fields near Bethlehem after dark.

It meant much to your dad since he used to think what a grand thing it would be to spend Christmas in Bethlehem. So last night I made believe it was Christmas.

We journeyed by moonlight to the fields of Boaz so very near Bethlehem. There, under the stars, we tarried at the mouth of an old cave which had been used for many years by the shepherds. In the stillness of the night, broken only by the sound of the wind and the barking of a dog in the distance, we lived again the Holy Night.

It wasn't hard to do. The sky was that midnight blue and heavily flecked with stars. The night air was cool enough to be chilly and the whole setting was very much as I had always pictured it. The only really difficult thing was for me to believe that I was there, even in this latter time, to "mark the spot." It bothered me little to ask if this should be the exact place, sufficient to know that I was near Bethlehem.

We came to the place in the spirit of one who seeks not so much to know precisely, but as one who comes to feel deeply. I know full well that it is impossible to say that this or that place was or is the exact location of some sacred event. However, I know in my heart that it was in this area and in this setting that the Christ of God did come as He came to no other place.

It is then that my soul is stirred anew. Could it be that Christ in heaven above looks down with a certain warmth and affection for Bethlehem? Could it be that with God, even as with men, that there are some places that claim a particular tug of the heart that other places cannot know?

Your dad was asked to read the Biblical account of what happened that Holy Night, so he turned to Saint Luke 2:1-20. I'm reasonably certain that as long as I live and God allows me my memory—this night will remain unforgettable. Already "sermon seeds" have been sown and I hope to cultivate them. If it pleases God this whole experience may be shared with my people come Advent in Messiah's Church.

Yes, boys, it is one of the glories of our Christian faith that God should "break through" to us and give us Himself in His son.

Daddy had some deep thoughts this good night in the Bethlehem fields. He asked questions like these—

Why did the shepherds first hear the good news? Why weren't carpenters or masons or preachers sung to by the angels?

How long did the Holy Family stay in Bethlehem?

Was the manger a really good or bad place in which to place an infant?

Who took care of the sheep while the shepherds went to Bethlehem?

The shepherds had to climb a hill to get to Bethlehem. Is that why some people never see Christ—because they refuse to go to higher ground?

Why don't you think about some of these questions and then we'll talk about them when daddy comes home. It was so good to go to Bethlehem town. I'm eternally grateful that the pilgrimage should be mine.

Love,

Dad

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Jerusalem, Jordan

Dear David and Jon—

Today has been one of those "perfect" days. While I should be in bed, I must take time to write you about it.

We were awakened this morning about 4:00 o'clock, while it was yet dark. As soon as your dad was dressed he climbed to the roof top of the main building here at the American colony and waited there until the others had assembled in the courtyard. From the roof top I could look across into the Israeli section. I could hear the roosters crowing and faint rays of light were piercing the eastern horizon. In the street below were to be heard the patter of feet while women walking so erect with baskets and trays on their heads carried produce for the market stalls. Occasionally I would find the heavily laden donkey and his "fellow traveler", the camel.

Once the group was ready, we walked on the Nablus road to a point near the Damascus Gate. There we entered a place that is called "The Garden Tomb". Here, many believe, is the authentic site for the sepulchre, so very near "Gordon's Calvary". At the break of day we waited at this "place of the skull" while one of the party read the Scripture account of the Crucifixion. From this point we went to the Tomb and there, in the Garden facing it, we turned once more to the Sacred page and lived again, on this quiet Sunday morning, the Resurrection scene. Even though the tomb might accommodate four or five visitors at a time,

reverently we entered in pairs. Each in his own way had communion with the living Christ, knowing full well that whether this be the exact spot or not, it was in a place like unto this that our Blessed Lord arose from the dead. With no hurry whatsoever, we paused in the Garden and before leaving we lifted our voices together as we sang:

All hail the power of Jesus' name  
Let Angels prostrate fall.  
Bring forth the royal diadem  
And crown Him Lord of all.

Your dad shall not take time in this letter to give you all the details of the day that follows, but he must touch roughly the high spots.

After breakfast, Professor Myers and I entered the Old City through Damascus Gate. We walked through the crowded bazaars and came eventually to the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in the very heart of the Old City. What a delight to find it here with its impressive tower.

We knew the service would be in Arabic, but we wanted to attend just the same. First it was Sunday morning, and then it would give us some idea of the spiritual ministry of our church to these people. We found the church comfortably filled and were delighted to note that about 80 per cent of the people seemed to be under 30 years of age.

Strange as it may seem, we had little difficulty in following the service. We recognized the confession, the creed, the Lord's prayer, the responses before and after the lessons. When it came to singing the hymns, your dad was just like Ernestine Krastins in Messiah's church. Ernestine, God bless her, came to us from Latvia and when she recognizes a hymn tune she sings for all she's worth in her native tongue. That's just about what we did when they sang the second hymn this morning, which is number 99 in the Common Service book.

At the close of the service a child was presented for holy baptism and we were pleased to observe it. What a good thing to see the witness of Christian faith. Who knows, perhaps it may be this child who may become in part the answer to all that vexes in this troubled place, once the land of the Redeemer.

In the afternoon we traveled to Jericho and the Dead Sea. Remember, Jon, and you, too, David, how I used to tell you the story that Jesus gave his disciples about the Good Samaritan? Now I'll be able to tell it to you again with a better description of what the road was like.

I still haven't told you everything about today. Can you wait until I get home?

Love,  
Dad



Dear David and Jon—

Jerusalem, Jordan

What full days we are putting in here in Jerusalem. All of us seem to be going at the utmost rate, since our time is limited and there is so very much to see, to study and what is more, to absorb. Yesterday we went from 4 in the morning until 11 at night.

No wonder I didn't include in last night's letter an account of what we did after supper. Perhaps I can tell you now.

Do you remember how much moonlight there was? It was so lovely that we decided to go to the Mount of Olives to visit the site, to behold the city and to pray. That's exactly what we did. How rewarding the experience.

Even though we were very, very warm in the afternoon when we were at the Dead Sea (our guide told us that when we were there we were 4,500 feet below Jerusalem) we found our jackets most welcome as the cool night air swept around us.

We stood within the shadow of a minaret. (A minaret is the high tower on the wall to which the Moslem goes to call his people to pray). There, high above the city, we read once more from the Good Book. This time we read the Ascension passage, for it was from the Mount of Olives that Jesus ascended into Heaven.

We realized anew the meaning of the "farewell" to the world and what the influence of His life has had and continues to have upon us and countless yet to come. Again and again it came to us that we were walking under skies where ground is sacred because of Him.

What a place from which to view Jerusalem. Nearby was the Russian church observatory on the summit of Olivet. I am told that the tower is 3,000 feet above sea level. Small wonder that our view was sublime. Looking eastward one knows that ahead and beyond lie the barren mountains and the deepwaddies into the Jordan valley. In the daytime, as we were to return later, one can see to the south the mass of blue that looks like the sky centered in the earth—and that is the Dead Sea. We recalled, as we remembered yesterday afternoon's journey into that area, that from one of the peaks which borders the sea that Moses looked upon the Promised Land. To the west we saw Jerusalem. To the north, we knew was the road to Damascus.

Yes, before us was Jerusalem. It's name means "Inheritance of peace," at least that's what some of us think the name means. But it surely has known little peace down through the ages. It has been a battleground during many, many centuries. As I stood there overlooking the city of Jerusalem, I remembered two things. First I remembered how our Blessed Lord beheld the city and wept for it. He had the answer to the needs of her people, even as He has the answer to all men's needs every-



where, but they would not follow Him. Then I thought of a statement that I had in my notes that I had copied about Jerusalem:

"Surely no city has suffered by the hand of man and nature as the chosen city of God. Sacked by invaders, rocked by earthquakes, her 33 centuries of tumult have been paying heavily a ransom price. She has withstood forty sieges and blockades, thirty-two partial destructions, two periods of desolation and seven total destructions; the present city being the eighth built on the debris of its seven predecessors, Six times she has been forced to change her religion. Her valleys have been filled and her hills leveled, her streets and buildings destroyed and her people slain and exiled. But Jerusalem has remained. Her spirit is eternal!"

Therefore it made little difference to me to think long or little about the streets and walls of the great city. They have come and gone. But the Jerusalem which is our hope, the city whose spires are of the spirit can never be destroyed. Such, boys, is the blessing of the faith.

Love,

Dad

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Jerusalem, Jordan

Dear David and Jon—

Surely you must know by this time that it is quite impossible for your dad to tell you about everything that we do in a day's time. Therefore, most of these letters tell you about a particular part of the day's experience that may mean something to you.

That's why I want to tell you about our visit to the Garden of Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives. It was one of the places I wanted so much to visit once we arrived here. We went there in the late afternoon, which seems about the best time to go—or better still in the early hours of the evening.

The garden is not large as it is kept today. I don't suppose it is much larger than "Uncle" Bucky's garden. The Franciscans, an order of the Roman Catholic church, care for the Garden and keep it in excellent condition. Most impressive of all things found there are the eight olive trees. Their massive and gnarled trunks indicate their age, and we are told that some of them probably were standing at the time of Christ. Should it be that they are not the original, however, we have every reason to believe that they have sprung from the roots of those that served as shelter for our Blessed Lord.

The Garden overlooks the tiny stream known in the Bible as the Kidron. Since we are in this country in the late Summer the brook is

dry. Above the stream one sees the slopes of the city and around it the wall with the "Golden Gate" before us.

This gate, a beautiful double gate, is held by some to be the "Gate Beautiful" (look in your Bible at Acts 3:2) but it is more likely that this gate was in the inner court of the temple. The loveliest of all thought associated with the Golden Gate is that nearby in the original wall was the place through which Christ made his triumphal entry into the Holy City. (Jon, do you remember how you told me the Palm Sunday story last March when you came home from Children's Church with your palm branch?)

There are those who believe that when Christ returns to earth, all nations bowing before Him, He will again enter this gate.

Interestingly enough, there was erected not too many years ago a very beautiful church in Gethsemane. It is often referred to as the "Church of All Nations." Whether its name has come from this prediction or because the church was built by contributions from many nations, I do not know. But this I can say, it is one of the most beautiful churches I have ever seen. The windows are of alabaster and their treatment leaves little to be desired. The altar is in exceptionally good taste and the whole interior breathes the benediction that rightly belongs to a house of prayer.

Of course the most significant thing in the church is the huge rock at the foot of the altar, and around which has been placed the communion rail. This rock, it is said, is the one upon which our Blessed Lord knelt in prayer in the Gethsemane Garden. Surely you have seen the picture of Jesus kneeling, so you may have a good idea of how large the rock is.

We who were there at the Garden realized again the place of prayer in the life of Christ. How often He prayed. Your dad has little doubt in his mind but what the greatest lesson that any person can be taught is the lesson of prayer. Jesus could never have done what He did had He not prayed.

There is no better time than now for your dad to thank you for your prayers while he's been away. God has a way of allowing us to know when folks breathe our name in prayer.

God bless you!

Dad



Dear David and Jon—

It doesn't seem possible that we have come this far in so short a time. In less than a month's time your dad, thanks to the mighty wings of the plane, has been in eleven different countries, and our journey is not yet complete.

Today we are in Tel-Aviv. What a transformation from what we have known. The city looks so much like a California town dropped down on the shores of the Mediterranean. I knew very well that I would find it something like this, but the actual discovery is still quite a distinct one in the face of the Bedouin tent and the camel caravan which are only minutes away.

Tel-Aviv has grown from the ancient city of Jaffa, or Joppa. It has an interesting history and there are some who like to think that Jaffa is the oldest city in the world albeit that its history goes back little beyond measureable time.

When we read accounts in the Book of Judges we may learn something of the importance of this ancient town as a Philistine port. In the days of the New Testament we find Jaffa associated with Dorcas, who was miraculously raised from the dead by the Apostle Peter. Our guide took us on our way to Tel-Aviv proper to the reputed house of Simon the tanner. What a delightful spot and even though we feel that this may not be the exact spot, one does know within his soul that it must have been very much like this. Peter, as you boys will learn, had his great vision atop Simon's house and went from there to make the first Gentile convert to Christianity.

What history belongs to this place. Here again another chapter of the Crusades was written and not to be overlooked is the fact that when Napoleon invaded Palestine it is said that he here massacred the inhabitants and shot in cold blood four thousand prisoners because he did not know how else to get rid of them.

But tonight all history is behind us. As I shall sleep once more by the music of the Mediterranean, I will think again and again of this modern city. What hope Tel-Aviv means today to countless Jews in all parts of the world. In a certain sense it is a symbol of all Israel.

Once the Free State of Israel had been established, the promise seems to have been made that any Jew anywhere who desired to come could look upon Israel as his home. Today's Tel-Aviv is good evidence of this. Her complexion is western and small wonder that you can discover many who have come from some of Europe's sore spots.

It is a very modern city, so modern that it seems "out of place" in all that is around it. Yet its banks, synagogues, pharmacies, stores, hotels, streets lined up with date palms, all combine to make it one of the most desirable places in all the land.

Tomorrow we shall have an interesting journey into Galilee and if all goes well your dad will sleep by the Sea of Galilee.

Love,

Dad

P.S.—In a letter that came today, your dad learned of the passing of "Aunt Harriet" (Harriet Whitehead King). How strange that the very night before I had written her a letter. Bless her soul, I'm sure she read it with the eyes from Heaven. "Aunt Harriet" from her sick bed, had sent me a check to bring with me and to use for the "neediest" child I would find. Last night I had written to advise her that the mission had been fulfilled. May her soul forever be in peace. Your mother and father can never forget the gracious influence of her life upon us. I fervently wish for you boys an "Aunt Harriet" along life's way whose kindness will be forever as a star that cannot grow cold.

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Tiberias, Galilee  
Israel

Dear David and Jon—

Today noon in a nice modern hotel your dad had lunch atop Mount Carmel. The spot was truly delightful in every way. While we waited leisurely for the meal to be prepared, we looked down upon the Mediterranean and up into the blue sky, flecked occasionally with white clouds. O course we refreshed our minds of what took place here so many centuries ago when the prophet Elijah was in contest with the prophets of Baal.

In a certain sense it was one of the most climactic events ever to take place in a prophet's life. Here, boys, it was shown who was the true God. You'll have to turn to your Bible for the story. Let me remind you in the meantime that after a day's work, once the altars had been prepared, it was not until Elijah had called upon God that fire came from heaven to consume the sacrifice, wood and stones, then licked up the waters around the trench. Read especially I Kings 18:16-41.

Once we continued our journey from Carmel we soon found Hermon and Gilboa. Nearby was identified for us Jezreel. This was the city of Ahab and Jezebel. To know something of what happened here you turn to your Bible again and read I Samuel 29; I Kings 18 and 19 and II Kings 8 and 9. We also saw, as we continued our course, Mount Tabor, where some think the Transfiguration took place. Others say it is too far removed from Jerusalem for that.

At a particular spot along the way, our driver stopped and we alighted to get an excellent view of the Plains of Esdraelon, referred to on occa-

sion as the Plain of Jezreel, Megiddo or Armageddon. In recent years the plain has blossomed forth in the literal sense of the word. Once a swamp and malaria infested, it has been reclaimed and has today the most fertile of fields. But the shadow of her earlier history makes a greater dent upon the mind than the glory of the latest in argicultural advance.

Esdraelon is thought of as a battlefield of the nations. Your dad's notes reveal that as far back as the 15th century before Christ, Egypt contended in battle with the empire of Hattiland and since then records indicate battles of almost every nation have been fought, gained or lost here, Hittites, Syrians, Israelites, Midianites, Phillistines, Assyrians, Greeks, Romans, Crusaders, Saracens, Turks and British. It was on this plain that Allenby routed the Turks. In fact the trees along side the road on which we were traveling were named in honor of General Allenby.

Again and again we must force ourselves to realize that we are standing on certain places where century after century look down upon us. Here the ages are speaking to the hours. Here with the whole panorama of civilization unfolded before us we can learn, if we will, the great lessons of history.

But what strange creatures we are. Most folks live by the present moment, as though nothing ever happened before and as though nothing would ever follow. That's why so much foolishness comes to pass.

There is no greater fool than the man who says history has nothing to teach him. Else why should God give us memory save that from the past we might chart a better course into the future.

Yes, your dad's preaching again. But you hold onto this and we'll talk about it again sometime—maybe when we sleep out under the stars.

Love,

Dad



Nazareth, Galilee  
Israel

Dear David and Jon—

Nazareth is a quiet town and quietly I walked its winding, narrow streets. Never did I pass a boy of about 12 with his dark hair, dark eyes and dark skin without saying to myself, "These are the boys of Nazareth and this is the way they must have frolicked in the street when Jesus was a boy."

In my mind's eye I looked for Jesus everywhere in Nazareth. I "caught a glimpse" of Him, I think, as a boy stood up on the wall of the village

well. He stood there very intently watching the people as they came to draw water.

I "saw" Him again when a boy stood by a partially blind man who went falteringly by the shops. The lad stood with concerned eye, as though at a second's notice willing and ready to throw himself into useful service for the afflicted soul.

In the shadow of a shop I saw a boy reach for a tool and hand it to the mechanic who was doing some repair work. The boy held the tool all right, but I seemed to feel that his thoughts were deep thoughts and far away.

A lad, little more than 12, came riding by on a donkey and was doing his best to make the animal travel at a more rapid pace. I snapped a photo of him as he passed me. He was a bit frightened by the attention I gave him, but went on his way, never looking back.

A funeral procession, headed by the altar boys and a priest, came down the main street of Nazareth. A group of curious-eyed boys watched as the folks went on their way to the burial ground. One lad, more so than the others, looked longer and was the last to turn his attention to something else.

I heard a boy shouting gleefully in the street of Nazareth and laughing at a smaller boy who was amused at his older companion. The latter was having trouble getting on a donkey already over-burdened by bags of grain.

Boys, boys, boys. Nazareth seemed full of boys and how pleased I was to see them, for Nazareth in a certain sense should be near to the heart of boys everywhere.

If you boys had been living in Nazareth when Jesus was a boy—how near His heart might you have been? Would He have numbered you among His closest playmates? If He had planned to go fishing, would you boys be the kind of boys that He would so much want to have go with Him? If He were choosing sides for a game to be played, would you boys be the kind of boys that Jesus would want to have on His side? If Jesus would like to have taken someone to sleep with Him atop Galilee hill, would He have asked you to go along? And when He would talk about the things of God would you have understood Him?

Love,

Dad



Dear David and Jon—

Once more we face west. It all seems so long ago, even though it's less than a month since we left New York and headed East. Now the greater part of the trip has been completed. After our stay here we fly on to Switzerland and then—even before you get this letter—your dad may be home.

Most of us are prone to evaluate our experiences and I dare say this August of 1953 easily qualifies for one of the most eventful months in my life. The whole panorama of the Near East, cast today with its tensions, in the shadow of civilization's cradle, had been unfolded before us.

The land of the Good Book takes on new meaning, passage after passage in the Bible can now be seen in the light of an actual and factual setting. This whole month is worth in some respects a good year in the theological seminary. I write these lines this way for this has been the primary justification for this trip—that I may return to my parish and the people of the community with greater conviction for the basic truths of the faith and with eyes that have been lifted above our local horizons.

I think how often "Uncle Charlie" Noll has told me of the need to travel and see how the "other side" of the world lives. So, in one way, I've come to look upon this trip as "Operation Understanding." (Even when going to New York City "Uncles" Leo and Jay and Butch had done much of the same thing.)

Tonight I sleep in Athens. Overlooking us is the Acropolis with its monuments of the past. The Parthenon, known to every student of ancient history, stands in broken form, but unbroken glory, the best preserved monument in Athens and surpassing all of the gems of Grecian Architecture. I could give you its dimensions and certain other data, but all that is not necessary now. Some day in school you might study these things and when you do, I hope you'll be pleased with the opportunity to look back on a day that was so glorious.

I must mention these names now, however, they may seem strange to you, and what a pity more so that they should sound strange to many, many others. Here they are—Solon, the Athenian law giver; Miltiades, the victor over the Persians on the plains of Marathon; Leonidas at Thermopylae. There are others, too,—Themistocles and Pericles, Plato, Aristotle, Zeno and, of course, Socrates. How sad that the only thing that some people know about things Grecian might be the three letters of cousin Joe's college fraternity.

One thing again remains indelibly impressed upon my mind from this journey, and it's this—the need for a greater interest in history. What

lessons we can learn by looking backward. What sign posts for the way are to be found.

I'll never forget standing there in Egypt along side of the great pyramid, with the sentinel of over 4,000 years behind me. How insignificant my petty fears and dislikes, the little things of the hour that could vex and irritate. How great, however, the deep heart throbs of the soul, unlike the stone of the pyramids, which remains eternal.

Yes, I have set my face to the East. Now I return, once more to shepherd a people and teach the way of the Master. As I return, it will not be as when I departed. No man can sleep under the Syrian sky or watch the stars of Galilee by the great lake or walk quietly some Judean hill and be the same as before.

To walk where Jesus walked is an experience that leaves a mark indelible upon the fabric of the heart. It is to be outdone only by those who anywhere at any time can know His presence by pitching their tents in the hill country of the soul. For Bethlehem, boys, is a place on a map, but it is more—it is the abiding place of the Lord Jesus in the souls of the faithful wherever they may be.

God bless you.

Love,

Dad

